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Refugee Reports

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U.S. RESETTLEMENT OF LATIN AMERICAN REFUGEES STILL STALLED, AFRICAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT GOING SLOWLY

In response to criticism of the U.S. refugee program from members of Congress and others that relatively few refugees from Africa and Latin America have been processed for U.S. resettlement, the State Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) have begun to pay increased attention to locating eligible refugees of concern to the United States from these regions.

The stage for more responsive processing from Africa and Latin America was set during last year's annual refugee consultations between Congress and the Reagan administration when Secretary of State George P. Shultz announced that the FY 87 refugee program would include "expanded refugee admissions from Latin America and the Caribbean" and "an increased ceiling for Africa to accommodate African refugees located far from processing posts in Africa, and those who have been stranded in Europe for several years."

In Latin America and the Caribbean, where not a single, non-Cuban refugee was processed for admission to the United States last year, certain measures have been introduced which could result in some non-Cuban refugee admissions for FY 87. A total of 1,000 places in the regional admissions ceiling of 4,000 have been set aside for non-Cubans.

The United States has also expanded the number of priority categories used to consider whether to admit refugees into the country (from P1-P2 to P1-P4). The additional categories to be used include spouses, unmarried children, and parents of U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, refugees, and asylees residing in the United States and refugees formerly employed by the U.S. private sector. In the past, the priority categories used for Latin America have been more restrictive than for any other region--essentially limited to people in immediate life-threatening danger, political prisoners, and former U.S. government employees.

Before a person can be considered from these priority categories for admission to the United States, he first must meet the definition of a refugee in the Refugee Act of 1980--the "well-founded fear of persecution" standard.

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The applicant must also be among the refugees determined to be "of special humanitarian concern to the United States." Last year, only Cubans were listed as being "of special humanitarian concern" in the Latin America/Caribbean region. This year, the State Department's directive to the field stated, "Until further information is available, [the] Department does not plan to designate Latin American groups which are of special humanitarian concern to the USG."

A State Department source said, "We are trying to get away from designating nationalities as being of special humanitarian concern. We are willing to look at any Latin American who comes forward."

No Latin American Refugees Processed in First Quarter FY 87 Despite these new initiatives, actual admissions from Latin America for the first quarter of FY 87 are no different than the previous year--zero.

The State Department issued a cable in November to U.S. diplomatic posts in Latin America asking them to quantify the size of local refugee populations and to assess the appropriateness of the U.S. resettlement option for them. The State Department cable said that those most in need of U.S. resettlement would likely be "refugees of all nationalities who are or were political prisoners." It also suggested that "many displaced individuals in Central America could also be considered potentially eligible."

A source in the State Department indicated that the responses from consular posts in the region "have not laid out a large number of possibilities for resettlement." In fact, one source said, "None were brought specifically to our attention." Another State Department source surmised that posts in the region are not familiar with the overseas refugee admissions program, the procedures, or the need.

The State Department also requested Latin America consular posts to assess available consular resources for pre-screening and preparing individual refugee applications for presentation to the INS. Unlike other regions from which refugees are processed for U.S. resettlement, Latin America has not had the presence of Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) personnel to help in preparing refugee

cases for INS interviews. The State Department, however, is now asking the UNHCR and private voluntary agencies in the region to help in identifying potential refugees for U.S. resettlement.

UNHCR does not favor resettlement as a major solution in Central America, according to a Joachim Henkel, head of the UNHCR liaison office in Washington, D.C. "It could be helpful for a limited number of persons," he said.

UNHCR has suggested to the United States that in addition to family reunification, there may be some "security cases"--about 100--involving refugees who cannot safely stay in their country of first asylum and also some cases of refugees who can only receive proper medical care in the United States. In addition, UNHCR has identified Ladino refugees in Honduras and Costa Rica as possible candidates for resettlement because local integration appears not to be an option for them.

Resettlement is Option of Last Resort

U.S. government officials point out that third-country resettlement is the option of last resort for resolving refugee situations.

Following the lead of the UNHCR, the United States holds that voluntary repatriation is the most preferable option, followed by local integration within the same region as the refugee's home country. Only when these first two "durable solutions" are not possible, should third-country resettlement be considered.

The U.S. government's preference for voluntary repatriation and local integration for Latin American refugees came under sharp attack from Sergio Aguayo of El Colegio de Mexico at a February 5 conference on Central American migration at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin, Texas.

"It's not the time for regional solutions," he said. According to Aguayo, the United States' push for regional solutions to the problems of Central America's refugees, ignores its own responsibilities to them.

INS Conducted No Interviews of Non-Cuban Latin American Refugees in FY 86

INS represents the other side of the overseas processing picture. Through the authority granted to the Attorney General by the

Refugee Act of 1980, INS is legally required to make determinations for admission of refugees to the United States. However, there are at present INS offices only in Mexico and Panama. In FY 86, those INS officers conducted no interviews of any non-Cuban refugees to determine whether they should be admitted to the United States, according to an INS source. The source said that as a result of the Immigration Reform and Control Act new INS offices would be established in the region, and that new processing posts could be designated. The source declined to say where the new offices might be located.

Doris Meissner, senior associate with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former executive associate commissioner of INS, told Refugee Reports that attempts to process refugees equitably from the region will be difficult given the overall rigid policy on Central America.

"It would take an entire turnaround on the foreign policy front to bring about a different pattern in refugee decisions," Meissner said. "The line officers are locked into thinking about Central America as an area of civil strife which people leave for economic reasons. They discount the fear of persecution and disallow gray areas."

Patricia Weiss Fagan, staff associate of the Refugee Policy Group, said, "I think the U.S. government is genuine in wanting refugees from Central America if for no other reason than to deflect criticism of its policies." She also said that third-country resettlement would be "an important gesture" to receiving countries, such as Honduras and Costa Rica, which have been feeling the strains of increased refugee flows.

A State Department source said, however, "We don't want to exacerbate the situation by creating a magnet that would draw out economic migrants hoping for U.S. resettlement" and thereby create even more difficulties for host countries such as Costa Rica and Honduras.

African Refugee Resettlement Program Moving Slowly Although not as dramatic a shortfall as in the Latin America and Caribbean region, only 1,315 refugees from Africa were resettled in the United States in FY 86, out of a regional ceiling of

3,500. The overwhelming majority, 1,285, were Ethiopians, mostly living in the Sudan. In the past year, small numbers of refugees from Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, and Zaire were also admitted. In the first quarter of FY 87, a total of 232 African refugees were admitted out of an annual regional ceiling of 3,500. Again, the vast majority, some 83 percent, were refugees from Ethiopia in the Sudan.

Lance Clark, staff associate of the Refugee Policy Group, said, "I personally find it hard to accept the decision to resettle Ethiopians overwhelmingly from eastern Sudan. There are certainly substantial numbers of people in other African countries who are in even greater risk."

Refugees in Djibouti in Jeopardy Clark said, "In no place in Africa is the tension and frustration level higher than in Djibouti, nor in any other place are political refugees in greater jeopardy of being returned home to a desperate situation."

A person who works in a nongovernmental capacity with refugees in Djibouti recently returned from the country and spoke with Refugee Reports about the situation. He indicated that since the issuance of a government circular on July 29 requiring refugees to register as part of a "voluntary repatriation" program, only about 600 refugees have voluntarily come forward and been repatriated. More than 90 percent of these have been Gurgura people from rural areas.

This source said, however, that urban refugees were in a much more vulnerable position, and continued to have well-founded fears of individual persecution if returned to Ethiopia. He said, "There are no real safeguards for these political refugees." He said that since Djibouti had issued an official government decree on the repatriation issue, and since they are having elections in 1987, "it would look bad if they didn't carry out the program."

This person was especially critical of UNHCR, which, he said, "wants to repatriate as many as possible." He said that UNHCR has not been issuing ID cards for refugees. In one recent incident, he said that 120 Ethiopians without refugee cards were rounded up in the Ethiopian quarter of

Djibouti-Ville, put in a steel freight train container and repatriated. At least six of them died of suffocation en route.

Another recent visitor to Djibouti, also from the private sector, who interviewed UNHCR staff, church workers, and refugees, said that "since it is widely recognized that the government of Djibouti will not force repatriation of either Afar or Issa refugees [each of which has made deals with the government], it is assumed that the current campaign must be aimed against political refugees." He said that "UNHCR has done nothing to dispel this view, giving no assurances about the safety of political refugees or about continuation of their status."

This observer spoke of an "anti-alien atmosphere" in the country, and said that December was a period of "real terror in the Dikhil camp." He added that there has been "a total breakdown of confidence in UNHCR on the part of the refugees."

UNHCR's Henkel told Refugee Reports, "We are aware that there are still refugees in need of protection and assistance in Djibouti who fall within the 1951 UN Convention refugee definition and who have been recognized on this basis." He added, "The government of Djibouti has assured us that it will continue to grant asylum to new arrivals who meet the internationally recognized refugee definition and that it will request the international community to maintain its assistance for those refugees who wish to stay."

A State Department source said, "We are satisfied that the repatriation program is voluntary." She said that the refugee leadership is now "more enthusiastic about returning."

This source said that there has been no more violence than periodically in the past, and attributed recent incidents to "hot-headed students." She said, "It has been nothing persistent or dramatic."

The State Department source said that the government of Djibouti has "backed off a bit" on its earlier order that those refugees who had undergone eligibility requirements to receive ID cards would have to re-register. Those eligible refugees who will not be repatriated would not now have to re-register.

The State Department source said that both the United States and UNHCR continue

to "watch the situation closely," but that the government of Djibouti does not allow third-country resettlement in any case.

She said that Djibouti might look upon third-country resettlement as exacerbating the flow of refugees into the country. She added that when the United States did process Ethiopian refugees in Djibouti in 1982 there were concerns about fraud and the magnet effect.

Henkel said that UNHCR communicated to the State Department its concern that the United States not resettle Ethiopian refugees in Djibouti at this stage because it might undermine repatriation efforts.

INS Circuit Riders Interview Refugee Applicants

There is no INS office in Africa. Officers from the Rome office--and sometimes on temporary duty from elsewhere, including the United States--travel as "circuit riders" to designated African consular posts to conduct interviews with refugee applicants for resettlement. In FY 86, the approval rate for these applicants was 60 percent. An INS source said that although circuit rider travel to the region used to be intermittent, a circuit rider now travels "at least twice a year to each post." The source cautioned, however, that it will be increasingly difficult to cover the "incredible distances to interview five or ten people, in the light of budgetary cutbacks."

One INS circuit rider told Refugee Reports about having interviewed 1,300 Ethiopian refugee applicants in a 13-day period.

Meissner, the former INS executive associate commissioner, said that the circuit rider approach has always been "a bit tenuous," which, she said, "is in the nature of things given the travel dollars and distances involved." Although of the opinion that the circuit rider approach has "not been handled as faithfully as it should have been," Meissner said that the approach itself would be reasonable "assuming the circuit rider gets there on a regular basis."

In response to an inquiry from Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) at a February 5 hearing on refugees from southern Africa before the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, Roger P. Winter, director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, said, "Eliminating, or at least"

minimizing, the processing delays requires that the U.S. either designate additional processing posts in the region (adding Lesotho, for example) and schedule more frequent visits by the INS "circuit rider" or, alternatively, designate certain southern African diplomatic posts as emergency processing centers where U.S. Embassy consular officers would be charged with interviewing and processing applicants for resettlement as the need arises."

Mitzi Schroeder, special assistant for U.S. programs of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), expressed reservations, however, about the idea of allowing U.S. consular officers more latitude for refugee processing. "I'd like to see everyone in every country get the same fair shake. It would foster regionwide consistency in interpretation of refugee guidelines to have the same well-trained individual handle this as a full-time responsibility."

Schroeder told Refugee Reports that she would like to see "provisions for making faster emergency decisions." She suggested that one solution for expediting the work of the INS circuit rider might be to have a JVA circuit rider prepare cases in advance, so that they would be presented to the INS officer in a consistent and uniform way. (Until recently, ICMC had been the JVA for the Sudan.) In such a role, the JVA would be able to clear out cases from embassies, discuss issues with UNHCR, and encourage consistent implementation of policies, according to Schroeder.

South African Refugees Sometimes Face Immediate Danger South African exiles represent another refugee population that could be of concern to the United States. In FY 86, 12 South African refugees were admitted to the United States; eleven more have been admitted in the first quarter of FY 87.

"We ought to be more aggressive in identifying South African refugees of concern to the United States," said Meissner. "There is no question that the United States has all kinds of interests there. The resettlement of even a modest number--several hundred--would be very helpful by demonstrating U.S. willingness to lend a hand."

Winter said, "Those exiles who no longer

wish to be associated with liberation movements such as the ANC and PAC are the real problem. Not only do they face a potential threat from South Africa," he said, "but they also are not generally welcome elsewhere on the continent."

A South African refugee who received political asylum in the United States told Refugee Reports that there are "many such people." He spoke of people being beaten up and denied food rations because of conflicts with the liberation movements. Some, he said, had been killed. "These people need immediate help," he said.

A former UNHCR official in Africa told Refugee Reports that the INS circuit rider in Dar-es-Salaam in 1984 "systematically excluded dissidents from the ANC and PAC from being accepted for admission because of their past associations with organizations that advocated the violent overthrow of the South African regime."

Meissner said, "We can't leave those judgments in the hands of line officers. The government must establish a policy to decide who is a refugee." Meissner added that she saw no legal barrier to consideration of this group as refugees. "It is purely a matter of interpretation."

A State Department official said that it is a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act to exclude anyone who advocates the overthrow of a legitimate government, but the official added, "I believe it would be waivable in this case." The official noted, however, that INS officers have "a lot of discretionary authority" in such areas. This State Department official thought that at the present time such cases are being considered on a case-by-case basis.

Recent Developments

FUTURE OF LAOTIAN REFUGEE PROCESSING APPEARS IN JEOPARDY

Resettlement opportunities for Laotian refugees in Thailand may be drastically curtailed after July 1, 1987, according to a recent letter from Thai government officials to a voluntary agency committee in Bangkok.

Earlier this month the Thai Ministry of

the Interior (MOI) sent a letter to the Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT), a membership group representing about 40 voluntary agencies. The letter stated that after July 1, 1987 refugees who were not in Phanat Nikhom, a processing center close to Bangkok, would be considered "as persons who no longer have an opportunity for third country resettlement." The letter went on to say that refugees who entered Thailand through the Laotian border screening program would be exempted from this deadline.

State Department officials have indicated that this would affect lowland and highland Lao refugees in the three northern camps of Chiang Kham, Ban Vinai, and Na Pho. One official told Refugee Reports, "We're taking it seriously," but suggested the announcement may only be "a ploy by MOI to focus attention on the issue" of future refugee resettlement for Laotians.

The official said the earlier Thai position had been to permit Laotian refugee processing to continue indefinitely as long as applicants were moved to Phanat Nikhom for interviewing.

Meanwhile, a State Department official told Refugee Reports that the United States was making an "intense effort" to process lowland and highland Lao in time to admit them during the current fiscal year. Because refugees must enroll in a six-month language and cultural orientation training program before coming to America, they must be approved by April in order to enter the country by the end of September.

State Department figures indicate that the U.S. refugee program in Thailand has been authorized to process up to 10,550 people during January, February, and March--the second quarter of the fiscal year and, traditionally, the most active processing period of the year. It is expected that most of the processing will involve lowland and highland Lao.

The official said that the State Department had authorized admissions of up to 8,900 highland Lao, predominantly Hmong, in FY 87. About 1,200 highlanders entered the country in the first three months of the fiscal year, and there are currently 2,300 highland Lao in the overseas training programs. Processing for the U.S. program will concentrate on the Hmong in Ban Vinai during the next two months, the official said.

For the first time since October 1984, lowland Lao refugees in the P-5 processing category were interviewed by the U.S. program. The P-5 category includes family reunification cases involving relationships other than that of parent, spouse, or unmarried children. Up to 1,000 P-5 cases were authorized for admission in FY 87, according to a State Department official, but it is unlikely the full number will be used.

During the last round of interviewing of P-1 to P-5 cases in the lowland Lao camp, Na Pho, in January and early February, the Immigration and Naturalization Service rejected close to 50 percent of the cases presented.

Nearly 12,900 Laotians entered the United States in FY 86, of whom about 3,500 were highlanders.

APPEALS COURT RULES ON SALVADORAN TORTURE VICTIM

On November 24, the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals reversed a ruling to deport a Salvadoran torture victim. The ruling had been made by an Immigration Judge and upheld on appeal by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA).

The case involved Carlos Ovidio Plateros-Cortez, a 24-year-old Salvadoran national, who had been singled out from a busload of passengers by the treasury police, detained, and tortured.

A former agent of the intelligence and security section of the Salvadoran National Guard, who said that he had participated in the execution of about 40 suspected leftists, testified at the asylum hearing before an Immigration Judge that Plateros-Cortez' name had appeared on a death list as a suspected subversive. The witness, who testified using a pseudonym, said that he had been ordered to kill Plateros-Cortez, but that he did not do so because he knew Plateros-Cortez and his family.

The witness further testified that the names of Salvadorans deported from the United States are put on death lists.

The State Department's Bureau for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs submitted an advisory opinion that Plateros-Cortez had failed to establish a well-founded fear of persecution, and the Immigration Judge

agreed.

On August 21, 1985, the BIA dismissed Plateros-Cortez' appeal, saying that he failed to show that he was tortured because of his race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

The BIA determined that the former National Guard agent was not a credible witness because he was a friend of Plateros-Cortez. The BIA also noted that Plateros-Cortez had earlier been deported from the United States in 1981, and that the reasons for his failure to apply for asylum at that time--illness, ignorance of the asylum option, and lack of legal representation--were "unconvincing."

The ninth circuit court ruled that Plateros-Cortez' testimony about his arrest, detention, and torture was credible and "uncontroverted." Citing an earlier precedent in *Hernandez-Ortiz v. INS*, the court rejected the BIA's conclusion that Plateros-Cortez had not shown that his torture was for political reasons, saying, "When the government exerts its military strength against an individual, absent any criminal activity or conduct, 'the most reasonable presumption is that the government's actions are politically motivated.'"

The court also disagreed with the BIA on whether Plateros-Cortez' earlier failure to apply for asylum should be held against him. In making its decision, the court quoted this exchange from his deportation hearing:

Q. Did anyone offer to help you fill out the asylum forms?

A. There was no one.

Q. Did you try to fill out the forms yourself?

A. No, I didn't know anything, I didn't know what to do. I didn't try because I didn't know how.

The ninth circuit court found that Plateros-Cortez met not only the "well-founded fear" standard for asylum, but also the "clear probability" standard for withholding of deportation. The court's authority, however, only applies to withholding deportation. It remanded the asylum question, which is granted at the discretion of the Attorney General.

Update

° In early February a senior Thai military official in Bangkok announced that Cambodians living illegally in Khao I Dang would be allowed to apply for resettlement if they surrendered themselves to the authorities by February 28. Major General Surin Vorathas, director of the Command Center for the Relief of Kampuchians, said that the illegal residents of Khao I Dang should present themselves to camp authorities by February 28. Those who do will be permitted to apply for resettlement, while those who do not come forward will lose any such opportunity.

U.S. officials have expressed confusion and skepticism at the offer. One source told *Refugee Reports* that Surin's statement indicated that the Thais "don't want to do another sweep of the camp. The last time they did that, someone got killed."

A recent report by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights states that in November 1986 an illegal resident of Khao I Dang "was badly beaten by several [Thai] rangers and then fatally shot in the back of the head at close range."

The official said that the February 28 deadline did not seem realistic, and that, thus far, no resettlement countries had expressed any formal interest in the illegal population, estimated at somewhere between 300 and 1,000.

° Victims of Sudden Unexpected Death Syndrome (SUDS), which disproportionately strikes Southeast Asian refugee men, have been found to have abnormally heavy hearts, according to findings from the Centers for Disease Control published in the November 21 *Journal of the American Medical Association* (see *Refugee Reports*, Vol. VII, No. 6).

In addition to the enlarged hearts found in all 18 autopsies of the Hmong, Mien, lowland Lao, Cambodian, and Vietnamese men included in the study, the researchers also detected abnormalities in the conduction systems of 14 of the hearts, but none showed blockages in coronary arteries which are associated with heart attacks and sudden death in non-Asian Americans. Abnormalities in heart conduction systems, the researchers warn, have not definitively been shown to be causes of

abnormal heart rhythms and sudden death.

° A Florida district court dismissed a suit brought by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) to require that Cuban adjustment for permanent resident status be restricted to the general quota requirements of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) as opposed to the the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 (see Refugee Reports, Vol. VI, No. 2).

Although the court dismissed FAIR's complaint by ruling that the organization lacked standing, it nevertheless addressed the substance of the complaint by determining that Congress had, in fact, intended that Cuban adjustment should not be limited by the general visa-charging requirements of the INA. The court noted that FAIR's interpretation would, in effect, repeal the Cuban Adjustment Act and call into question the status of hundreds of thousands of Cuban entrants and residents.

° According to UNHCR sources, on February 5, a group of 542 highland Lao crossed the border into Thailand, pursued by Lao government troops. An estimated 19 members of the group were killed in the fighting. The new arrivals, who entered at Mae Charim district in Nan province, consisted of 369 Hmong and 167 Khmu, two hilltribe groups from the mountains of Laos. They joined about 800 other highlanders already in the area.

Current Research

STUDY COMPARES ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

A recent study has found that both Ethiopian refugees entering the United States through the U.S. government's overseas processing program and Ethiopian asylum seekers in the United States share similar fears of persecution, but that Ethiopian asylum applicants in this country are less likely to be approved than overseas refugee applicants.

The study, by Peter Koehn and Girma Negash of the University of Montana, found that "asylum seekers are in no sense less motivated by fear of individual persecution

and personal physical danger than are officially admitted refugees." In fact, the authors discovered, "a higher proportion of the asylum claimants in our study fit the prevailing legal definition of a refugee in comparison to heads of household granted official refugee status by the U.S. government."

The study notes that in FY 84 INS district directors rejected 77 percent of Ethiopian asylum applications, but that during the same year, the rate of denials for overseas Ethiopian refugee admissions was 40 percent.

The authors were able to rule out a variety of other factors often cited in the denial of asylum claims. Most asylum applicants were students in the United States at the time that events occurred in Ethiopia giving rise to their fears of persecution. Therefore, the United States became, for them, a country of first asylum. The vast majority of Ethiopian asylum seekers also entered the country legally. Also, the authors point out, the government of Ethiopia is seen as an adversary by the U.S. government, which has been shown generally to result in higher approval rates for asylum claims.

Asylum applicants were found, on the whole, to be highly educated and to have had secure employment in Ethiopia at the time they left the country. "Asylum petitioners are less likely than officially admitted refugees to have left home for economic reasons given their more secure employment status in Ethiopia." In fact, the researchers found that "the mix of motives in the case of migrants from Ethiopia usually does not include economic considerations...[and] there are no strictly economic migrants among the refugees and asylum claimants."

The authors noted that the findings in the case of Ethiopians are consistent with comparisons between asylees and refugees of other nationalities. The authors conclude that "the stricter standards applied in asylum proceedings can only be discriminatory."

The 70-page study, Refugees and Asylum Applicants: Implications of the Case of Migrants from Ethiopia for United States Policy, will be published in early April by the Center for Ethiopian Studies, a division of the Ethiopian Community Development



Urban refugees from Ethiopia prepare for new professions. Photo credit: UNHCR

Council. For more information, contact them at 3213 Columbia Pike, Arlington, VA 22204. (703) 685-0510.

POLES, AFGHANS, ETHIOPIANS, AND ROMANIANS ADJUST TO LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

A recent study of economic and social adjustment of refugees resettled in the United States from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Poland, and Romania generally found them to be highly educated—which has resulted both in opportunities for rapid adjustment as well as in unrealistic expectations that have hindered adjustment.

The two-volume study, The Economic and Social Adjustment of Non-Southeast Asian Refugees, was undertaken by the Research Management Corporation for the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services. It was based on field visits to Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and Northern Virginia/Washington, D.C.

Improvements in Refugee Service Delivery Urged The report observes that these refugees are often confused and frustrated due to unrealistic preconceptions and expectations about American life. It recommends better cultural orientation to prepare them for the realities of this culture. Acknowledging their generally high levels of education, the report says that English

language training should focus less on survival language skills and more on literacy.

The report also urges that greater attention be paid to vocational training and professional recertification for these refugees. "The Afghans, Poles, and Romanians have large numbers of professionals among their adult arrivals," the report says, "who would better benefit from recertification programs and realistic professional job counseling."

The authors recommend that service agencies who work with these refugees include staff who speak their languages. They also recommend cross-cultural training for non-native staff, as well as greater awareness of the current social, cultural, and political backgrounds of these nationalities.

Finally, the study recommends changes in the welfare system that would provide support without engendering dependency. The generally high motivation and education levels of these refugees are matched by high expectations for job placement, causing frustration and resentment at entry-level jobs well below their home-country employment status and experience. In addition to recertification and employment training, the study suggests that public assistance could include alternative arrangements such as temporarily scaled down payments to make up differences in inadequate wages and the inclusion of medical benefits for entry-level jobs.

Ethiopians Comprised Largely of Young, Single Men Most of the resettled Ethiopian refugees in the study were young, single men in their twenties who were students before fleeing their country. Although fairly well educated, they generally had little work experience.

Use of public assistance among this group varied according to their geographic location. In Dallas, almost none of the refugees used public assistance, whereas up to half of the group in Los Angeles and Northern Virginia/Washington, D.C. were using it. Most of the working Ethiopians were in entry-level jobs, and few had moved up the economic ladder. They were generally characterized by service providers as highly motivated with a strong work ethic.

Poles Show Rapid Economic Advancement

Most of the Polish refugees were single and married adults in their twenties and thirties, virtually all of whom participated in the labor force. Couples generally had small families, with rarely more than two children.

Almost all Poles, the report found, improved their employment circumstances within the first year, usually within the first several months. They learned English well and found better jobs, often in line with their former professions.

Although Poles were characterized by service providers as very hard workers, they also noted unrealistic expectations about American lifestyles, and noted some cases of severe depression, especially among former persecuted dissidents, as well as alcohol abuse.

Romanians Seen as Having High Potential for Adjustment

The study found significant differences between Romanian refugees in Chicago—generally characterized by larger families, lower educational levels, low English proficiency, and membership in fundamentalist Christian sects—and Romanians in Los Angeles and New York, who generally have professional backgrounds and smaller families.

Described by service providers as highly motivated, hard-working, and conscientious, the Romanian community is about evenly divided between those who socialize within their community, especially in church-related activities, and those who are quite

isolated and suspicious of social interaction. "This is most often attributed," the report noted, "to the fact that they are working so hard they have little time for it, and to the very predominant perception among Romanians that there are Romanian government confederates among them who report back to Romania and thus are a threat to family and friends back home."

Afghans Highly Educated, Yet Dependent on Public Assistance

Although the educational level of Afghan refugees was described by the report as "very high," they also made relatively high use of public assistance. The report found that many of the refugees with professional backgrounds found the status decline into entry-level jobs intolerable. Many of these older professionals also had large families, resulting in relatively high AFDC grants, sometimes in excess of what could be earned by an entry-level job. Afghan adjustment was impeded, according to the report, by the belief that their stay in the United States is temporary and that they will return to Afghanistan after the Soviets withdraw.

The report will soon be printed and available, free of charge, from Linda Gordon, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services, 330 C St., SW, Rm. 1229, Washington, DC 20201.

Projects and Programs

TRAINING PROJECT OFFERS MENTAL HEALTH IDEAS TO ESL TEACHERS

It is common wisdom in the resettlement field that knowing English can help immensely in a refugee's initial adjustment to life in the United States. It may also be true that the process of learning English, under the guidance of a trained and sensitive teacher, not only can provide needed language skills but also can reduce or prevent the kinds of stress that lead to more severe mental health problems.

A training project carried out last year by the American Council for Nationalities Service (ACNS) suggests that language teachers can play a critical role in helping students with stressful problems by teaching adjustment skills and enhancing self-esteem.

Under a grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement in Region I, the ACNS project trained a total of 118 ESL (English as a second language) teachers from eight north-eastern states and developed a handbook for teachers on preventive mental health in the ESL classroom.

ESL Classrooms a Natural Focus for Prevention

The handbook outlines the mental health concept of "primary prevention," which its authors define in the context of the ESL classroom as "the promotion of mental health through enhancement of self-esteem, coping skills, and adaptive behavior." The booklet explores the roles and the limitations of ESL teachers in applying primary prevention techniques in their work. "ESL teachers must view themselves as agents of change," according to the handbook. This involves "considering the social, psychological, and language needs of the refugee student together," and recognizing that they are part of a larger network of "helpers."

There are several reasons why the ESL classroom provides a natural focus for primary prevention, according to the handbook. ESL teachers are not only an "integral link in a network of human resources." They are also "unique." Of all professional service providers "they are typically given the most esteem and trust by refugees," and "they spend by far the most time in face-to-face contact with refugees during their earliest days here."

"The ESL classroom offers a structured environment that can provide a nonthreatening group setting for people to learn to communicate and get grounded in the world," Michael Paul, of the International Institute of Rhode Island, an ACNS affiliate agency, told Refugee Reports. Paul was manager of the training project as well as a principal author and editor of the handbook. "We felt that some of the people coming to class weren't functioning in other environments. They weren't processing information at any level, let alone learning a new language," Paul said.

"We had a feeling that if teachers knew more about mental health, they could help students more to function better outside the classroom," Paul said. He cautioned that this did not mean teachers should intervene personally to resolve their

students' problems. "We tried to dissuade teachers from dealing one-on-one with housing problems, alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, and so forth. Rather, they should manipulate these as teaching issues."

The project included a series of four one-day training sessions at sites in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Staged at one-month intervals, the sessions covered the following topics: an overview of mental health issues, the role of the ESL teacher, community resources, and primary prevention techniques for the classroom.

The 50-page handbook, which was a direct outgrowth of the training workshops, states that "the primary task of ESL instructors is to teach English." To be effective in the area of primary prevention, however, teachers may need to assume other roles, such as being a listener, a cultural role model and mediator, and an information provider.

ESL teachers should conduct assessments of the "real life needs" of their students as an "essential first step" in devising primary prevention strategies for their classrooms, according to the handbook. Suggested assessment techniques included interviewing, listening and observing inside and outside the classroom, and "social mapping," a process of systematically examining aspects of community life and community resources.

"The challenge for the ESL teacher is to get out in the world," said Don Cohon, a psychologist from San Francisco who had worked with refugees for ten years. Cohon served as a consultant to the ACNS project and was one of the authors of the handbook. "The message I would hope to convey," he said, "is to know your system, what's happening in the refugee community and the community at large."

Based on the results of the needs assessment, the handbook suggests that ESL teachers should revise or enhance their teaching curriculum to address the stressful situations their students are encountering. "Students need to learn language to question, to express fears and worries, ...and to develop strategies for responding to problems," the handbook states. One example given was to include the topic of racial or sexual harassment in lessons on

employment, housing, or community services.

The handbook cautions that successful presentation of such sensitive issues "is contingent upon a classroom environment that is both student-centered and student-directed, encouraging peer support and sharing of experiences, feelings and opinions."

Evaluation Finds Training Effective Jane Grover of RMC Research in New Hampshire was responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the training sessions. Based on interviews with about 30 teachers, she concluded that the workshops had been effective in helping teachers to become more sensitive to mental health issues and the needs of their students. Grover quoted one teacher as saying, "I am more aware of the day-to-day realities of what refugees are coping with." Another teacher wrote, "I now take a broader view of my role. I see myself less as a technician imparting skills...I am now reaching my students on a deeper level, perceiving them as whole people with lives outside the classroom."

"The trainings have made teachers more aware of the whole refugee experience," said Janet Isserlis, coordinator of the refugee ESL program for Project Persona in Providence, Rhode Island. She mentioned one teacher who had begun to incorporate more "student-centered" activities in her lessons, and was making a conscious effort to "foster a warm and supportive environment in the classroom."

Isserlis said it was far more difficult to measure any improvements in the mental health of the students. "A lot of it is things you can't see. I'd like to believe that added knowledge and awareness do have an impact."

Grover noted that limited funding did not allow for an evaluation of the training's impact on students. Cohon told Refugee Reports, "It would be nice if the National Institute of Mental Health wanted to pursue an evaluation of the program." He recommended that a study could follow a few individuals for a one-year period to see whether primary prevention strategies had been effective.

Staff of Travelers and Immigrants Aid in Chicago have been using the handbook to develop trainings for teachers in Chicago and outlying areas. Adrienne Chambon told

Refugee Reports of the special problems encountered by elementary school teachers. "They feel isolated from the system. They are not trained as counselors, but they know more about their students' problems than the school psychologists."

Bill Dolnick, also on the Chicago staff, said, "We're trying to tell them they can look outside of the school system to the refugee system and other social service providers. Instead of saying 'I'd better not listen to problems because I'll get over my head,' they could be saying, 'I can listen and make an appropriate referral.'"

"Teachers should know when and where to make appropriate referrals," said Cohon, "but I don't think the mental health system is serving refugees particularly adequately."

Another problem Cohon noted is that "the resettlement system itself can contribute to stress. The complexity of the bureaucratic structure overwhelms people." Dolnick spoke of the pressure to get refugees quickly into jobs. It may be no one's intention to impose additional stress on refugees, he said, but "the political realities do create conflicting goals."

Copies of Preventive Mental Health in the ESL Classroom: A Handbook for Teachers are available for \$6.50 each from Darlene Turner, American Council for Nationalities Service, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. (212) 532-5858.

Reader Exchange

° On January 20, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) published internal draft regulations to implement the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. INS expects to formally publish proposed regulations in the Federal Register for public comment on or about February 25. For further information contact the INS at (202) 786-4764. \

° On February 9, the Voice of America (VOA) will begin broadcasting personal messages in the Dari and Pashto languages to families and friends in Afghanistan. Toll-free numbers have been set up to record messages in each language. Messages will

be broadcast as taped on the answering machine. Political messages will not be accepted. For the safety of those to whom messages are intended, full personal names and addresses should not be used. Personal details should be left vague, such as, "To my family in Uruzgan Province, from their son Akbar in Dallas, Texas." Although the answering machine will ask for the caller's phone number, the phone numbers will not be broadcast.

For messages in Dari, call 800-53-PAYAM. For messages in Pashto, call 800-247-6958.

Resources

NEW REPORT DOCUMENTS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES OF CAMBODIANS IN THAILAND

More than a quarter of a million Cambodians in Thailand have been victimized by a wide range of abuses in the last two years, according to a report released by the New York-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. The 97-page report, Seeking Shelter: Cambodians in Thailand, documents repeated rapes, robberies, extortions, and murders of Cambodian refugees by other Cambodians and by Thai security forces.

The Lawyers Committee report, written by Stephen Golub and Diane Orentlicher, recounts numerous abuses by armed Cambodian bandits, Thai paramilitary units, and Cambodian guerrilla forces.

The Lawyers Committee reports that some rangers of Task Force 80, the paramilitary units that the Thai government has assigned to guard and protect the Cambodians, have themselves "robbed, beaten and raped the residents of some camps, with apparent impunity."

Cambodians seeking to enter Thailand in the past year have suffered even greater abuse at the hands of Cambodian guerrilla forces, according to the report. Both Cambodian and Vietnamese females--including girls as young as eleven--have been repeatedly gang-raped by guerrilla troops who intercept them as they make their way into Thailand.

Most of the abuses have been committed by troops of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), a non-communist

faction of the resistance. Once intercepted by KPNLF troops near the border, numbers of Cambodians and Vietnamese have been detained until relatives abroad send ransoms for their release.

The report is also critical of Thai policy regarding some 59,000 Cambodians living in camps in Thailand that are controlled by the Khmer Rouge, a communist group responsible for the deaths of more than one million Cambodians during its four-year rule of the country from 1975 to 1978. "Khmer Rouge guerrillas exert rigid control over the lives of those camp residents," the report states. "Pervasive intimidation has at times been reinforced by removal of some of the civilians to places where they must undergo 'reeducation,' and of others to the Cambodian interior, where they are reportedly pressed into the hazardous duty of transporting military supplies."

Though an estimated one-third of the civilian residents in the Khmer Rouge camps would like to move to camps of the non-communist guerrilla factions, Thai policy prevents this.

The Committee's recommendations, among other things, focus on the future of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Thailand. UNHCR currently provides protection and other services to the residents of Khao I Dang, but has no jurisdiction over the Cambodians living in the border encampments. The report urges that the UNHCR be permitted to retain jurisdiction over Khao I Dang residents, even if they are relocated, and that its "protection mandate be expanded to encompass the entire population of displaced Cambodians in Thailand."

The report, Seeking Shelter: Cambodians in Thailand, is available from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 36 West 44th St., Suite 914, New York, NY 10036. (212) 921-2160.

GAO ASYLUM STUDY AVAILABLE

The study on U.S. asylum practices conducted by the General Accounting Office (GAO) has now been published. A preliminary draft of the report was analyzed in Refugee Reports, Vol. VII, No. 11.

The study focused on the four largest

nationalities of asylum seekers in FY 84, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Poles, and Iranians, who, together, comprised 79 percent of the total. The approval rates for the four nationalities varied widely: El Salvador, 2 percent; Nicaragua, 7 percent; Poland, 49 percent; and Iran, 66 percent.

Although the report is recently published, readers should note that the approval rates upon which it was based are already somewhat obsolete, as they have changed significantly since the 1984 data. In FY 1986, the approval rate for Nicaraguans increased to 30.8 percent; for Salvadorans, 7.3 percent; for Poles, 54.8 percent, and for Iranians, 65.4 percent.

Based on the 1984 data, the GAO attempted to determine if there were nationality biases in the asylum adjudications. The report found that applicants from different countries who claimed to have suffered similar mistreatment did not have the same approval rates. Of those applicants who claimed they had been arrested, imprisoned, had their life threatened, or were tortured, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans had a "much lower" approval rate than applicants from Iran and Poland. But the report qualified the finding by saying that it was not possible to determine variations in the adequacy of documentation and severity of mistreatment.

The advisory opinions issued by the Department of State on asylum claims were shown to have a significant impact on determinations by the Department of Justice (DOJ). In 99 percent of the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan cases the DOJ decision agreed with the State Department.

A lack of data concerning the reasons for granting or denying asylum prevented the GAO from being able to draw definitive conclusions about whether asylum standards are uniformly applied. "Approximately 73 percent of the files," the report noted, "did not contain any explanation of the basis for the decision."

The study found that relatively few denied asylum seekers are actually deported. In fact, none of the denied Iranian, Polish, or Nicaraguan cases under review were deported. However, of the 8,365 denied Salvadoran cases, 212, or 2.5 percent, were deported.

The report makes three recommendations

to the Immigration and Naturalization Service: 1) to document the reasons for asylum decisions; 2) to collect and review data on denied asylum applicants; and 3) to take action to place denied applicants in deportation proceedings where appropriate.

The study, Asylum: Uniform Application of Standards Uncertain--Few Denied Applicants Deported, GAO/GGD-87-33BR, is available from the U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20877. The first five copies of the report are free. Additional copies are \$2 each.

INTERACTION CHRONICLES PRIVATE VOLUNTARY AGENCY ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA

More than 3,700 projects of some 150 U.S. private voluntary agencies working in Africa are catalogued by InterAction in Diversity in Development: Project Descriptions by Country and Sector for Africa, Volume II.

InterAction, the American Council for Voluntary International Action, researched and prepared the 620-page document with financial support from the U.S. Agency for International Development and Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT). Project descriptions are cross-referenced by organization and country. In addition to descriptions of the African development projects, entries include contact names and addresses.

The first volume, published in 1985, analyzes U.S. private voluntary agency involvement in Africa, while the second volume describes and classifies the data.

To order, send \$7.50 for Volume I or \$25 for both volumes to InterAction, 200 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10003. Multiple order discounts are available.

NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM USCR

The U.S. Committee for Refugees will release the World Refugee Survey: 1986 in Review in March. In addition to statistics on worldwide refugee populations and country-by-country reports on refugee protection, the 1986 Survey includes essays on Europe's growing restrictiveness toward asylum seekers, new policies affecting refugees in Thailand, and a first-hand account of the developing refugee crisis in South

Africa.

USCR has also recently released two new additions to its issue paper series. The first, Despite a Generous Spirit: Denying Asylum in the United States, finds U.S. asylum practices to be restrictive and inhumane, particularly with regard to Haitian and Central American asylum seekers. The second, Refugees from Mozambique: Shattered Land, Fragile Asylum, provides analysis of the conflict that has forced some 350,000 Mozambicans to flee to neighboring countries.

An issue brief has been produced on The Karens of Burma: Thailand's Other Refugees. The report, based on a fact-finding mission to Thailand, highlights the situation of more than 18,000 Karen refugees who have fled from Burma.

The World Refugee Survey and issue papers are sent free of charge to Refugee Reports subscribers. The Karens of Burma is available upon request. For nonsubscribers, or for additional copies, please send \$6 for the World Refugee Survey and \$2 for issue papers and issue briefs to USCR, 815 15th St. NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20005. (202) 667-0782.

PBS TO AIR DOCUMENTARY ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES IN PENNSYLVANIA

On March 30, PBS will broadcast "Postscript to a War: The Indochinese in America," a 30-minute documentary portraying Southeast Asian refugees trying to adjust to life in the United States.

A peasant family from Laos marvels at their new surroundings. "A general's wife does not live like this in Laos," says the refugee woman as she points to her carpeted floor and electrical appliances.

Others are less sanguine; a Buddhist monk expresses concern about maintaining traditional values and culture in America. A group of Lao workers are shown to be living in horrid conditions on the premises of the poultry farm where they work. The film captures their lives--crowded into squalid trailers, they experience a complete breakdown of traditional Lao social and cultural support systems and at the same time virtual isolation from American society.

Although scheduled for national broadcast from PBS to its affiliates at 10:30 PM

EST, on Monday, March 30, check local listings for broadcast times.

AMERICAS WATCH ON RIGHTS ABUSES IN HAITI

On January 20, the Reagan administration reported to Congress that Haiti is improving its human rights record, a finding which is a prerequisite for the continuation of U.S. security and development assistance.

The State Department "determination" credits Haiti for improvements, such as establishing a framework for elections, investigating human rights abuses and corruption under the Duvalier dictatorship, and "continuing to cooperate with the United States in halting illegal emigration to the United States from Haiti."

The U.S. administration's assessment is challenged by a recent report from Americas Watch and the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees. The report, Duvalierism Since Duvalier, charges that "a large gap has developed between officially stated goals and the actual actions of the government." Based on three fact-finding missions to Haiti in the post-Duvalier period, the report found that "there has been scant progress in halting human rights violations by the security forces, in investigating past abuses, and in bringing to trial corrupt officials and military officers responsible for past and present abuses."

The 75-page report is available for \$7 from Americas Watch, 36 W. 44th St., New York, NY 10036. (212) 840-9460.

We would like to point out some errors and revisions in our December 1986 issue (Vol. VII, No. 12).

INS has revised its statistics on the number of Cuban cases granted asylum by INS district directors in FY 86. The chart on page 14 should read that 99 Cuban cases were granted asylum from June 1983 to September 1986, rather than 221. The approval rate for Cuban cases during this period drops from 10.3 to 4.9 percent.

Also, in the Indochinese Refugee Program chart on page 5, the figures on Khmer resettlement in the U.S. should read: 19,097 in FY 85, 9,789 in FY 86, and 138,448 cumulative since 1975.

SUMMARY OF REFUGEE ADMISSIONS
CUMULATIVE

Fiscal Year	Area						TOTAL
	Africa	East Asia	Eastern Europe	Soviet Union	Latin America	Near East/South Asia	
1975	0	135,000	1,947	6,211	3,000	0	146,158
1976	0	15,000	1,756	7,450	3,000	0	27,206
1977	0	7,000	1,755	8,191	3,000	0	19,946
1978	0	20,574	2,245	10,688	3,000	0	36,507
1979	0	76,521	3,393	24,449	7,000	0	111,363
1980	955	163,799	5,025	28,444	6,662	2,231	207,116
1981	2,119	131,139	6,704	13,444	2,017	3,829	159,252
1982	3,326	73,522	10,780	2,756	602	6,369	97,355
1983	2,648	39,408	12,083	1,409	668	5,465	61,681
1984	2,747	51,960	10,285	715	160	5,246	71,113
1985	1,953	49,970	9,350	640	138	5,994	68,045
1986	1,315	45,454	8,713	787	173	5,998	62,440
1987	232	7,383	2,235	297	0	2,250	12,397
TOTAL	15,295	816,725	76,271	105,481	29,420	37,382	1,080,574

Source: U.S. Department of State/Bureau for Refugee Programs

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